

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: FURTHER POLL DATA

REF: LONDON 16642

SUMMARY. GALLUP POLL PUBLISHED OCTOBER 21 AFFIRMS VOTER PREFERENCE SHIFT NOTED REFTTEL, DETERIORATION IN APPROVAL OF PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN AND NO CHANGE (AS COMPARED WITH SEPTEMBER POLL) IN NEGATIVE RATING OF MRS. THATCHER. ON HEAD-TO-HEAD QUESTION AS TO WHICH WOULD MAKE BETTER PM, CALLAGHAN RAN AHEAD, ALBEIT BY A REDUCED MARGIN. NOP MARKET RESEARCH SURVEY RELEASED OCTOBER 19 REPORTS SIMILAR FINDINGS. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT GENERAL ELECTION AT THIS TIME WOULD MEAN TROUBLE FOR GOVERNMENT; HOWEVER, EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT VOTER PREFERENCE MARGINS NARROW SHARPLY (AND EVEN REVERSE, AS IN 1970) DURING ACTUAL CAMPAIGNS. UNIFORM SHIFT OF MAGNITUDE REPORTED BY POLLS COULD PLACE LABOR'S "SAFE" WORKINGTON SEAT IN JEOPARDY AT FORTHCOMING BY-ELECTION. END SUMMARY.

1. GALLUP POLL COMPLETED OCTOBER 18 AND PUBLISHED BY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DAILY TELEGRAPH OCTOBER 21 REVEALED SHARP GAIN IN RE-

SPONDENT PREFERENCE FOR CONSERVATIVE PARTY, AS COMPARED TO SIMILAR POLL TAKEN SEPTEMBER 23. WITH "DON'T KNOW" RESPONSES EXCLUDED, CONSERVATIVES LED LABOR BY 48 TO 36 1/2 PERCENT, A MARGIN OF 11 1/2 PERCENT. THIS COMPARES WITH 1/2 PERCENT TORY LEAD IN SEPTEMBER. AS WOULD BE EXPECTED, SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE DECLINED, SHOWING 20/64 PERCENT ON APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL MEASURE (THIS COMPARES WITH 29/52 IN SEPT. SURVEY).

2. NOT SURPRISINGLY, RESPONDENT SATISFACTION WITH CALLAGHAN PERSONALLY ALSO DECLINED: 36 PERCENT WERE SATISFIED IN MOST RECENT POLL, WITH 47 PERCENT EXPRESSING DISSATISFACTION (SEPTEMBER FIGURES WERE 46 AND 34 PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY). RESPONDENT OPINION OF MRS. THATCHER REMAINED NEGATIVE, 40/45 PERCENT ON THE SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED SCALE, AND UNCHANGED FROM SEPTEMBER. ASKED TO OPINE AS TO WHICH WOULD MAKE THE BETTER PM. RESPONDENTS EXPRESSED 4 PERCENT PREFERENCE FOR CALLAGHAN (33 PERCENT TO 29 PERCENT -- SEPTEMBER MARGIN WENT TO CALLAGHAN BY 21 PERCENT MARGIN).

3. NOP POLL RELEASED OCTOBER 20 DISCLOSED SIMILAR RESULTS, THOUGH MARGINS DIFFERED (E.G. TORY VOTER PREFERENCE LEAD WAS 14.8 PERCENT, THATCHER SCORED 40/42 PERCENT ON SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED MEASURE).

4. COMMENT. MARKET OPINION AND RESEARCH POLL DATA ANTICIPATED IN REFTEL WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL NEXT WEEK. GALLUP SURVEY IS PROBABLY MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND WAS MOST ACCURATE OF ALL MAJOR POLLING ORGANIZATIONS IN OCTOBER 1974. AS GALLUP FIELD WORK DID NOT BEGIN UNTIL AFTER ANNUAL PARTY CONFERENCES, IT APPEARS TO REFLECT FULL MAGNITUDE OF LABOR CONFERENCE'S NEGATIVE IMPACT. IT ALSO REAFFIRMS VOLATILITY OF BRITISH ELECTORATE. ALTHOUGH POLL DATA CONTINUES TO REVEAL AMBIGUITIES, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT CALLAGHAN AND HIS PARTY WOULD BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE IF ELECTION WERE HELD TODAY. RESULTS OF PAST GENERAL ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, SUGGEST THAT VOTER PREFERENCE MARGINS NARROW SHARPLY OR EVEN REVERSE DURING CAMPAIGN PERIODS, AS WAS CASE IN 1970. IF OPINION SHIFTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPORTED IN POLLS ARE UNIFORM, GOVERNMENT'S WORKINGTON SEAT WHICH WAS CONSIDERED SAFE (LONDON 16248) COULD BE LOST TO TORIES IN NOVEMBER 4 BY-ELECTION.

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